

# Children's Services Performance Report

Children's Health, Social Care and  
Education Overview and Scrutiny  
22<sup>nd</sup> July 2015

*Data position end February 2015 and end  
March 2015 where data available*

# Headline Messages from Data position at end of February 2015 and end March 15 where data available

Early Help

**Contacts**– Family Contact Point records all contacts to the Council for children's services. There were 9895 contacts from Apr 14- Feb 15, compared to 7368 for the same period in 2013/14. 2338 (23.6%) contacts progressed to referral to children's social care.

All contacts to the Council are now recorded- the conversation rate to referrals to CSC remains high

**Early Help Record and Plan** - In the first three quarters of 2014/15 a total of 358 early help records were completed. 135 were completed in just the third quarter.

Early Help Record and Plans have increased since their introduction in June 2013 although we would still expect to have more

1741 children are receiving additional support from the **health visiting** service in addition to the universal service offering.

1190 children had an involvement with **TAMHS (Targeted Mental Health in Schools)** as at the end of March 2015. 120 young mothers are being supported through Family Nurse Partnership.

CiC

**Children in Care** - At the end of February 2015, there were 242 children in care. A reduction from 252 at the end of 2013/14. 45 children (18.6%) were in externally commissioned placements at end Feb 2015, lower than 19.8% in 2013/14.

Number of CiC is below national average which is being monitored.

**Adoption** – 12 children were adopted between April 2014 and February 2015. In 2013/14, 16 children were adopted.

Adoption is a priority area of focus for the service

**In-learning rates** for 16, 17 and 19 year olds are all at or above national rates. LA ranking improved from 101 to 81. **NEET (Not in Education, Employment and Training)** rate declining for 18 year olds, but still above national average. Slight drop in LA ranking from 101 to 104. Good success in reducing **unknowns**. Better than national average at all ages. LA ranking improved from 98 to 73.

Good progress in Raising Participation Age (RPA) and reducing NEET.

Education

**Absence** – Primary absence in March 2015 was 3.8% Secondary absence was 5.5%, both higher than in the same period in the previous year. Official national data shows Swindon with lower school absence and fewer persistent absentees

**Exclusions** – There were 917 Fixed Term Exclusions in Swindon secondary schools at end of Term 5 (May 2015). There were 20 Permanent Exclusions (PEX) to end March 2015, compared to 9 for the same period in the previous year.

There were 799 FTE from secondary academies and 118 from a maintained school

# Headline Messages from Social Care Safeguarding Data End of February 15 and end March 15 where data available

## REFERRALS

**Referrals** – There were 2338 referrals from April 2014 to Feb 2015 compared to 1977 for the same period in the previous year. Of the 2338 referrals, 28.1% are re-referrals. Most relate to domestic abuse notifications.

The percentage of social care specific referrals progressing to assessment was 83.7% for April 14 to Feb 2015. This is lower than end January 2015 when 92.5% was reported.

The demand on the ‘front door’ of social care remains very high. The national picture is variable.

## ASSESSMENTS

### Statutory Assessments

From April 2014 to February 2015, a total of 2171 statutory (social care) assessments had been completed in an average of 30 days. The national average is 25 days. The number open at any one time in Assessment & Child Protection team remains too high.

Swindon transferred to a single statutory assessment at the beginning of March 2014.

There were 24 **child protection enquiries** (also known as **section 47 investigations**) finished in Feb 2015. The percentage of enquiries going to Child Protection Conference within 15 working days has decreased from 81% between April and December 2014 to 74.3% between April 2014 and February 2015. This is higher than the national average of 69.3%.

## CHILD PROTECTION

**Child Protection Plans** - 216 children were on a child protection plan at the end of December 2014. The number has decreased from 251 in August 2014. The number of children on a child protection plan is above the national and statistical neighbour average. 94.2% had their **reviews** completed on time compared to 98.4% in 2013/14.

Specific performance improvements were implemented to improve the timeliness of Initial Child Protection conferences as well as managing the increases occurring. Number of children on plans is above national and statistical neighbour average

The rate of children starting a **child protection plan** for a second or subsequent time has increased to 18.8% between April 2014 and February 2015. Conference Chairs are monitoring this to explore any possible themes

At the end of February 2015, 2.62% (6 children) of children ceasing a protection plan had been on a **plan for 2 years or more** compared to 5.4% in 2013/14.

Children on subsequent plans increased. There are fewer children remaining on a plan for 2 years compared with previous year.

---

## Early Help Services

### Performance Assessment

**Early Help Record (EHR)** A total of 135 EHRs were completed during quarter 3 2014/15. This compares to 110 in quarter 2 2014/15. For quarter 3 the previous year (2013/14) 115 CAFs/EHRs were completed.

The CAF was replaced by the Early Help Record and Plan in November 2013. Ofsted recognised the strength of Early Help in Swindon and the access that families have to early help before entering statutory services. Partner agencies may need to consider if their staff are appropriately starting EHRs as the proportion of those undertaken in comparison to statutory social care assessments is disproportionate (although this is not particular to Swindon and is a national issue).

**Early Help Plan (Plan) and Early Help Review (Review)** The Early Help Record will always lead to a plan being created for the child. The plan may be delivered in a number of ways depending on its complexity.

In quarter 3 2014/15 68 plans were completed. This compares to 61 initial TACs/EH Plans in the same period in the previous year. There were 61 plans completed in quarter 2 of 2014/15.

132 reviews were completed in quarter 3 2014/15, compared with 159 in quarter 2. There can be a delay in input of Early Help Records, Plans and Reviews due to schools sending in periodically. Data for the whole year will be refreshed in June to ensure these are captured.

### Strengths

- ✓ Council Early Help services are seen as a strength

### Challenges/Risks

- We need to increase the number of Early Help Record and Plans that are created and children supported to prevent escalation of cases to children's social care.

## Safeguarding at the social care front door – contacts, referrals and assessments

### Performance Assessment

**Contacts** Family Contact Point records all contacts for children's services in their wider sense (ie includes Early Help) as well as contacts that become referrals to Children's Social Care. There were 9895 contacts to Family Contact Point from April 2014 to February 2015, compared to 7368 for the same period in 2013/14. There were 917 contacts in February 2015, compared to 908 in January. *An analysis is being undertaken around patterns of contact/referral volume increase, and this will be reported to LSCB in due course.*

**Referrals and Re-Referrals** 2338 referrals were received in Children's Social Care between April 2014 to February, compared to 1977 for the same period in the previous year. In February there were 213 referrals compared to 187 in January. Swindon is in line with the national and statistical neighbour averages (Swindon 532.5 per 10,000 under 18 compared with 560.6 statistical neighbour and 525.3 national average).

Of the 2338 referrals from April 2014 to December 2015, 28.1% (657) are **re-referrals**. This is an increase from 26% for the same period in the previous year. It is also higher than the national average of 23.4% (2013/14). A local audit identified that often the re-referrals arrived at a time when the first referral was still open – indicating communication to partners is not strong enough and is being addressed.

**Statutory Assessments** From April 2014 to February 2015, a total of 2171 assessments were completed taking an average of 30 working days. The average length of time taken nationally last year was 25 working days. 785 statutory assessments were 'open' as at the end of February 2015. This remains high, but is an improvement from 850 in January 2015. Not all of these assessments are overdue.

**Percentage of social care specific referrals leading to statutory assessment** 83.7% of social care specific referrals progress to assessment from April 2014 to February 2015. This is a decrease from the end of January 2015 when 92.5% was reported. As only social care referrals are reported here, it is anticipated that as triaging arrangements mature, this figure will rise to nearer 100%.

**Number of children in need (section 17 social care)** The number of children in need (this does not include children subject to a child protection plan or children in care) has decreased to 1322 at the end of February 2015, down from 1353 in January 2015. This is above the national (1110) and statistical neighbour (1165) average. This is a 30.1% increase from 1016 at the same point in 2013/14 and needs to be addressed to ensure these cases couldn't be better managed in Tier 2 or universal services.

### Strengths and Challenges

**Strengths** The service is managing a significant risk in referrals and assessment being undertaken due to the sheer volume. The timeliness of the new statutory assessment appears to be sound and the number of cases going from referral to assessment is also good. A new permanent team manager started work in Family Contact Point/Assessment and Child Protection Team in November 2014.

**Challenges** The number of re-referrals being made to the service is being addressed following a practice audit and the volume of children in need cases held within Children's social care is being monitored to ensure effective and timely impact as the service will need to ensure a more timely 'step down for cases.

---

## Safeguarding Referral and Assessment to Social Care

### Performance Assessment

#### **Workforce information for Children's Social Care:**

Overall caseloads compare reasonably with the national picture. Caseloads in the Assessment and Child Protection Team (ACP) have reduced since Quarter one but this is the team where caseloads are higher than the service would wish. Caseloads in ACP team now average around 30 – 35 children, per social worker, averaging elsewhere across the service between 23 - 25 per social worker. Throughout the year the Council has increased resource in response to increased demand and service pressure, in September 2014 agreeing to 7 extra establishment social workers.

The new configuration of teams, disbanding the Children in Care Team as well as the Court Team, has seen the creation of four community teams, with one Team Manager and two Assistant managers, 9 social workers and 2.2 social care workers, in each team, that were in place in early February 2015.

Through an active recruitment drive for social workers and managers, social worker vacancies have reduced from 20% to 10% but front line Children's Social Care (CSC) Managers remains an issue with 33% vacancies, although this figure includes the newly established 5 x Assistant Team Managers. All these roles are covered by temporary / agency staff.

#### **Multi-Agency Risk Panel (MARP)**

Children's Social Care operate the MARP process. All the services highest risk cases may be reviewed there as well as any case that other partners are worried about high risk being referred for discussion. Most high risk CSE cases are reviewed at the Panel as well as cases where professional are concerned for other reasons – such as gang activity. To assure itself that the MARP is effective and having the desired outcomes, a review has been completed and was reported to the LSCB in June 2015.

### Strengths

- Good progress in recruiting social workers

### Challenges

- Continued challenges in recruiting social work managers

## Child Protection Processes and Outcomes 1

### Performance Assessment

**Child Protection Enquires (also known as Section 47's) going to initial child protection conference within 15 working days** - 333 child protection enquires were completed from April 2014 to February 2015. This compares to 489 in the same period in 2013/14. There were 24 enquires completed during February 2015.

269 out of the 333 child protection enquires completed went to **child protection conference**, compared to 269 out of 489 in the same period in 2013/14 indicating that a clearer threshold for the process is now in place. The percentage of enquires that went to initial child protection conference within 15 working days has increased between April 2014 and February 2015 to 74.3%. This is good compared to the national average of 69.3%, but a slight decrease from 77.9% in 2013/15. This performance is also good in the context of an increase in the number of children on child protection plans.

**Children on Child Protection Plans** 216 children were on a child protection plan at end February 2014. This is still a relatively high number, although the trend has been decreasing since August 2014 when there were 251 children on child protection plans. There was an increase from 196 in January 2015, and 30 children became subject to a child protection plan in February 2015. The monthly average was 24 between April 2014 and January 2015.

Between April 2014 and February 2015, 94.2% of children on child protection plans had their **reviews** completed on time. This is down from 98.4% in March 2014. The national average is 94.6% and the statistical neighbour average is 96.7%. Urgent action is being taken in Quality Assurance and Reviewing which has been a contributing factor to this improvement.

**Number of children having second or subsequent plans** Is 18.9% between April 2014 and February 2015, an increase from 11.1% in April 2014. This is above the national average (15.8%) and statistical neighbour (16.4%) and further understanding of the reasons for this increase is required needed.

**Duration of children on child protection plans** 2.6% of children ceasing a child protection plan remained on a plan for two years or more between April 2014 and February 2015, compared to 5.4% in the previous year. This is below the 2013/14 national average of 4.5% and below the statistical neighbour average of 4.2%.

### Strengths

- ✓ The timeliness of child protection conferences is positive

### Challenges/Risks

- Partners need to work to reduce the number of children subject to Child Protection Plans
- Chairs need to improve the timeliness of Review Child Protection Conferences

## Performance Assessment

**Number of children in care** 242 children were in care at the end of February 2015, up 6 from January 2015. This compares with 252 at the end of 2013/14. Swindon is below the national average (286.2 children in care when scaled to the Swindon population). 45 children in care (19%) were in externally commissioned placements at the end of February 2015. This compares with 19.8% (50 children) in 2013/14. 10.7% of children in care were placed more than 20 miles away from their home address, down from 14.3% at the end of March 2014. This is improved performance from 2013/14 and in line with the national average. 86.4% of looked after children were in family placements at the end of February 2015. This is a slight increase from 86.0% in January 2015 and remains above the national average of 80%.

**Placement Stability** Short term placement stability remains an issue. At the end of February 2015, 4.96% of children in care had 3 or more placements. Year end performance is projected to be higher (18% for previous 2 years in Swindon compared to 11% nationally). 11.6% of children in care had either 3 care address changes or 3 new placement information records. Swindon has more adolescent young people in care than the average and we know this adds to placement stability issues.

**Adoption** - 12 children were adopted between April 2014 and February 2015. In 2013/14 a total of 16 children were adopted.

**Timeliness of Adoption** – The average number of days between coming into care and being placed for adoption is high, at 853 days compared to 636 nationally. Performance has improved since the end of October when 844 days was recorded. We know this figure is also higher due to the complexity of the children that were found placements.

The Fostering & Adoption Team Manager has confirmed his retirement in May 2015, and recruitment is underway.

## Strengths

- The numbers of children needing placement outside of Swindon remains low. We have been able to adopt some children with particular/special needs this year to date despite making the timeliness figure for adoption higher.

## Challenges/Risks

- The rate of children adopted is receiving attention to ensure the levels are appropriate.
- The service continues to explore ways of enhancing placement stability.



---

## Children, Families and Community Health Quality Assurance Framework

Children, Families & Community Health have recently reviewed its **Quality Assurance Framework** and introduced a new quarterly performance board to oversee the introduction of new social work quality standards. It has also developed some Key Quality Indicators (KPIs), to sit with its Performance indicators to start providing improved information on how good the services are rather than simply how many or how much of an activity it conducts.

**Children and Families - Child protection audits** - The Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Team has undertaken **audits of 12 child protection cases** and **29 'mini' audits of cases** where a request is made for an initial child protection conference. This has shown that child protection thresholds for the area social care teams are appropriate and work has been undertaken with the A and CP team on thresholds for conferences, quality of reports on the ICS system and management oversight.

**Children and Families - Looked after children review audits** - An audit by the Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Manager of 40 LAC review minutes indicated that there were inconsistencies in the IRO's approach to recording and a range of practice areas. These audits also indicate that the LAC review Minutes lack consistency for recording decisions that are SMART and outcome focused with timeframes and responsibility and discussion for permanency at 2nd review for every child. Work has been undertaken within the team to improve consistency in these areas.

**Staff Change:** The prior Head of Safeguarding left her role in December 2014. A new permanent appointment has been made and she will take on a revised job of Service Manager Quality Assurance & Review. The new role will focus on the service lead for safeguarding, quality assurance and the Principal Social Work strategic lead. One of the priorities for the interim manager is to support the development of an annual audit/survey plan for Children's Social Care as well as take on the Chair of the LSCB Quality Assurance Sub group.

### Strengths

- A new Quality Assurance Framework will strengthen the services confidence in its assessment of the quality of the service

### Challenges/Risks

- To embed the new Quality Assurance Framework.

## Exclusions

### Performance Assessment

#### **Fixed term exclusions (FTEs) in the secondary sector**

In Swindon, during the academic year 2013/14, there were 1049 FTEs from Swindon secondary schools. Of the 1049 FTEs, 863 were from Academies, and 186 were from a maintained school.

The latest Swindon data available (complete to the end of Term 5 – 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2015) indicates that there have been 917 FTEs. Of these 917 FTEs, 799 were from Academies and 118 from a maintained school.

#### **How many children have been Permanent Excluded (PEX) from school?**

20 children were permanently excluded from Swindon schools up to end of March 2015, an increase from 9 permanent exclusions for the same period in the previous year.

19 PEXs were from secondary-aged pupils with 1 being primary-aged. 17 pupils with a PEX were Male while 3 were Female. 16 PEXs were from pupils in years 8, 9 or 10.

14 pupils had their Permanent Exclusion withdrawn so far in 2014/15, and this compares to 21 for the same period of the previous year.

Latest figures made available by the Department for Education show that PEX as percentage of school population for Swindon in 2012/13 was 0.04, slightly lower than 0.05 for the previous year, and this compares to 0.06 for England, 0.06 for the South West and 0.07 for Statistical Neighbours.

### Strengths

- Collaboration between all secondary schools and SBC to manage provision for pupils at risk of or in receipt of permanent exclusion

### Challenges/Risks

- Both fixed term and permanent exclusions are up against previous year's figures
- Latest available comparative figures for fixed term exclusions (2012/13) show Swindon among the local authorities in England with highest FTE rates (20<sup>th</sup> out 151)
- Children with characteristics of vulnerability are overrepresented among those that are excluded from school.

### Performance Assessment

**Primary School Attendance** Primary absence was 3.8% in March 2015, similar to the same period of previous year, at 3.7%. For reference, absence in Primary schools in Swindon in 2013/14 was 3.6% while the national and regional averages were 3.8%.

**Secondary School Attendance** Secondary absence was 5.5% in March 2015, higher than for the same period of previous year, at 5.0%. For reference, absence in Secondary schools in Swindon in 2013/14 was 5.0% while the national and regional averages were 5.1% and 5.3%, respectively.

**Persistent Absenteeism (less than 85% attendance)** 915 (3.3%) pupils were deemed as persistent absentees in 2013/14, lower than 1,227 (4.5%) pupils in the same period of the previous year, and also lower than the national and regional averages of 3.5% and 3.6%.

### NEET, Participation in Learning and Youth Unemployment – March 2015

March 2015 figures show that the proportion of 16-17 year-olds (academic ages) in learning activities in Swindon was 91.2% (4,743 young people), higher than previous year's figures of 90.4% (4,610 young people). Official figures show Swindon with higher participation in learning figures than comparative areas: national average with 90.6%, and regional average at 89.6%.

The proportion of 16-18 year-olds (academic ages) in Unknown activities in Swindon is 4.5% (349 young people), significantly lower than last year's figure of 7.8% (601 young people), and this compares to national and regional averages of 6.5% and 7.3%.

The proportion of 16-18 year-olds (academic ages) that is NEET in Swindon is 5.6% (421 young people), lower than last year's figures of 6.0% (428 young people), and this compares to national and regional averages of 4.8% and 4.6%. When analysing figures by age, the NEET rate for 18 year-olds in Swindon (10.3%) is above the national average of 7.5%. This NEET rate for 18 year-olds has however started to come down, with almost 2%pts lower than December 2014 figures.

Youth unemployment related figures show a positive picture for the wider young people cohort (up to 24 year-olds). The number of 18-24 year-olds claiming JSA halved over the year: 2.6% (440 young people) in March 2015, compared to 5.2% (870 young people) in the previous year, and compared to 2.9% nationally. Latest official youth unemployment rates show similar rates against the previous year, but there are still significant numbers of economically active young people who are looking for work but that are not being successful in their job search.

### Strengths

- Latest official figures show Swindon with lower school absence and fewer persistent absentees
- Post-16 numbers in learning have increased, and there are fewer Unknowns
- Significant reduction in the youth unemployment rate so that we are now below the national average from a position of being higher than the national figures.

### Challenges/Risks

- NEET figures for 18 year olds are above national and regional averages

### Performance Assessment

#### Reducing the number of Young People committing offences for the first time – First Time Entrants (FTE)

April 2014 to March 2015 (Q1-Q4 data)

The locally set target is to maintain low numbers of first time entrants (FTEs) into the justice system. Whenever possible, low level offending is dealt with without taking young people to court, especially if the young person has not been in trouble before. In the community the Police encourage reparation by the offender direct to those affected by their offending, (paying or repairing damage or a genuine apology etc. as part of a Community Resolution). In total there have been 186 **Community Resolutions**. In 2013/14 there were 273, so this is a reducing trend to watch.

Where offences are not suitable for a community resolution young people may be suitable for a **Cautions**. An example would be where there is no victim or the circumstances are more complicated and need a formal process. Cautions are given at the police station and can involve an assessment by the YOT and can involve Conditions being agreed to make good the harm done or completing basic interventions such as improving school attendance. In total there were 106 Cautions and 16 Conditional Cautions. In 2013/14 there were 55 Cautions and 28 Conditional Cautions, showing a significant increase in the use of Cautions.

Based on the previous year's outturn the target is to have less than 44 **first time entrants** into the justice system per quarter. Against this figure there were 122 First Time Entrants (subject to data cleaning) by the year end, which shows a continuing trend for the reduction in FTEs. These trends are in line with what is happening nationally, where there is a significant reduction in youth offending.

**Re-offending** data is produced by the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) using police and Youth Justice Board (YJB) data and is based on a rolling cohort identified 24 months previously. Year on year Swindon YOT re-offending rate has been broadly in line or better than the national average which is currently 35%. During this period, however, the local rate rose to a high of 41.7%. Data suggests this is due to a small number of persistent offenders from 2011/12 re-offending, but as they 'roll through' the cohort timeframe it is expected to return to normal rates. Re-offending rates are predicted to rise across the country due to the reducing cohort of young people entering the justice system. In March 2015 the YOT was subject of a **full joint inspection** which ascertained that there were no practice or procedural issues of concern that were contributing to this rise at the time or in place currently. The final inspection report was published on 10<sup>th</sup> June.

### Strengths

- Offending rates are low and reducing

### Challenges

- To ensure re-offending rates are monitored to ensure we fully understand the issues and impact of small numbers of offenders.